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First Committee

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Chairman: Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81 (continued)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Pérez-Otermin (Uruguay) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am addressing the First Committee during a session of the General Assembly that will be remembered for the historic opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), an instrument that culminates an important stage in the denuclearization process, and more specifically definitive nuclear disarmament.

That process saw its turning point during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, when a significant number of States took the initiative that ultimately produced two resolutions: 50/65, which called on the Conference on Disarmament to conclude a multilateral, verifiable instrument so as to enable its signature by the outset of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly; and 50/70 A, which deplored the nuclear testing that had been carried out in the course of 1995. Uruguay participated actively in that process, as it was one of the first countries to support Australia's initiative aimed at the adoption by the General Assembly of the text of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty. That initiative ultimately enjoyed the support of an overwhelming majority of Member States.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, although an important achievement on the road towards denuclearization, is only a first step. We duly

appreciate the agreement and understand that it makes possible aspirations for a commitment to eliminate nuclear testing from this day on. Furthermore, we appreciate the significance this will have for international cooperation, in particular in the area of verification. Nevertheless, we continue to have certain doubts concerning the complicated process of its entry into force and the fact that nuclear testing that does not involve explosions may continue to take place.

The process of denuclearization must be pursued further. The beginning of the review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), scheduled for 1997, should, *inter alia*, give fresh impetus to our work to reduce nuclear arsenals. The renewed efforts to bring about a nuclear-free world by means of a decisive reduction in the arsenals of nuclear-weapon States should not be limited to the successes we have already seen, such as the CTBT and the indefinite extension of the NPT. Completion of the preparatory work for the Review Conference of the NPT, to be held in the year 2000, should be given our enthusiastic support.

Another point worthy of mention in the debate of this Committee is the historic advisory opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice on 8 July. In that opinion, the highest international judicial body stated that the threat or use of nuclear weapons contravenes the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and is accordingly contrary to international law, and in particular to the principles and rules of international humanitarian law. The Court also underscored the obligation of States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament. This important pronouncement by the highest



legal body of the United Nations system is a milestone that will, from now on, provide a framework for discussions within this Organization and in the area of treaty law.

As concerns nuclear-weapon-free zones, we would like to express our satisfaction at the progress made since the signing of the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia and in Africa. The signature of the Protocols to the Rarotonga Treaty by France, the United Kingdom and the United States, which means that all five nuclear-weapon States are now parties to the Treaty, is of particular importance.

Through the declaration of geographic regions as nuclear-weapon-free zones, we have reached a point where the entire southern hemisphere and certain adjacent areas are now free of all nuclear-weapon-related activities. Taken together, the Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Antarctic treaties mean that we are now on the road to freeing the southern hemisphere from such activities as the development, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer and use of nuclear weapons.

In this respect, we should give our full support to Brazil's proposal to recognize this trend, an initiative that also falls within the context of other activities of the special sessions of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and in particular of the resolution of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which helped to establish this kind of arrangement as one of the major instruments of international peace and security.

With respect to conventional weapons, we would note that, in principle, Uruguay supports the proposal of the delegation of Germany with respect to mine-clearance in areas of ongoing peacekeeping operations. This kind of weapon, which has been rightly described as small-scale arms of mass destruction, continues to cause irreversible damage and to claim lives on a daily basis well after conflicts have ended. Minefields, the end result of the use of millions of mines all over the world, constitute one of the most important challenges to our work to rebuild societies in post-conflict periods.

Uruguay's contingents have had to confront the risks involved in mine-clearance activities, have suffered the effects of anti-personnel landmines, including casualties in Angola, Mozambique and Western Sahara. We have therefore spoken out on a number of occasions against the distribution, stockpiling, export and production of anti-personnel landmines. It is high time to tackle this question

and to seek solutions to the material and economic effects of this kind of weapon.

In Vienna last May, Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects was adopted. This Protocol refers to the use of mines, booby-traps and other devices. It should be seen as a first, important step towards eliminating this class of weapons of mass destruction and of delayed effect. Uruguay will also again co-sponsor the various draft resolutions to be submitted in the course of this session on assistance in mine clearance and on a moratorium on the export of landmines.

In this framework, which has been referred to as micro-disarmament, it is particularly important to address in depth and creatively the problems caused by the proliferation of small and light arms. These are used in an astounding number of actions, ranging from acts of aggression between States to common crimes. These activities are related, *inter alia*, to drug trafficking, internal disruption, organized crime and the actions of mercenary groups. They are encouraged under an arms-control regime that allows the free and easy circulation of weapons used for crimes of this nature through a clandestine and seemingly unstoppable system of transboundary trade. In this respect, Governments should be ready to support the recommendations of the panel of experts that has been working on this issue since June 1996 with the ultimate aim of reducing the traffic in these weapons and curbing their devastating effects.

Lastly, I should like to refer specifically to the most recent session of the Disarmament Commission. In our last statement in the general debate of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, we expressed a certain degree of concern about the slow rate of work in the Commission, since no important results had been forthcoming at recent sessions of that body. We should note that, at its regular session in 1996, the Commission approved a set of guidelines for controlling international arms transfers and eradicating illicit arms trafficking. This achievement gave fresh impetus to the Commission's work. My delegation believes that the topics that will be on the Commission's agenda in the future, in particular those relating to nuclear-weapon-free zones and conventional disarmament or to mine clearance in peacekeeping operations, are of particular importance.

Mrs. Florez Prida (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Speaking on behalf of the delegation of Cuba at

this session of the Committee, I wish to convey to you, Sir, our congratulations on your well-deserved election to serve as Chairman. Our congratulations also go to the other officers of the Bureau.

We would also like to take this opportunity to place on record the Cuban delegation's gratitude to Ambassador Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun of Mongolia for the dedication he brought to the office of Chairman of this Committee at its fiftieth session.

An objective assessment of what has happened in the year since the First Committee last met leads us to the conclusion that, although some positive steps forward have been made, there has been very little progress in meeting the priorities that our countries agreed to establish in the Programme of Action of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We therefore have no reason to relax in our work if we wish some day to realize the objective of general and complete disarmament under strict international control.

Last year, in a number of resolutions, the General Assembly underscored the need to take immediate action in the area that Cuba regards as our highest priority: nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, this has not proved to be possible; but more disturbing still is the fact that a certain nuclear Power unhesitatingly declared in the general debate that it is simply unrealistic to expect the Conference on Disarmament to address the question of disarmament. Cuba wishes once again to reiterate its firm position in favour of establishing on a priority basis an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. In this respect, the programme of action proposed by a significant number of delegations in Geneva, including Cuba, is a tangible contribution that we hope will be properly taken into account in the negotiating exercise.

The Advisory Opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on 8 July notes that

"there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion"

— and my delegation would stress "conclusion" —

"negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control".
(A/51/4, para. 182 (f))

This Opinion is confirmation by the highest multilateral legal organ of the fundamental importance of the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Recently, the so-called Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was adopted. It should be seen as the culmination of the repeated calls for such action from the international community over several decades. However, the Treaty does not live up to expectations and is definitely not the legal instrument that we should have liked to have seen. The delegations that were most actively involved in the negotiating process are perfectly well aware of the intransigent position adopted by certain nuclear Powers. Ultimately, this position made it impossible to set this Treaty in its proper context of disarmament and non-proliferation in all their aspects. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty only prohibits the carrying out of tests through explosions, a technicality that is hardly of concern to the nuclear Powers and certainly does not commit them to ending the qualitative development of such weapons.

At the same time, by forcing the adoption of the Treaty by means of breaching the established procedures of the Conference on Disarmament, a very negative precedent was established with regard to the credibility of the Conference as the single multilateral negotiating body in the area of disarmament.

With regard to other weapons of mass destruction, Cuba has been taking an active part in the negotiating process aimed at strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention through the adoption of a verification protocol. As our delegation to the Ad Hoc Group of governmental experts on this issue has repeatedly stated, we believe that a future protocol should ensure compliance with all the provisions of the Convention, including those relating to exchanges and transfers for peaceful purposes.

The Cuban delegation cannot fail to express its deep concern at the current situation with regard to the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The failure of the two main possessors of such weapons to ratify the Convention at a time when the moment of its entry into force appears imminent opens up the real possibility that this legal instrument may become another Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The Preparatory Commission for the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, at The Hague, will have to assess the situation carefully and take the appropriate decisions to address it.

The Disarmament Commission confirmed this year its unquestionable usefulness as a specialized deliberative body for all Member States of our Organization when it successfully concluded consideration of all the items on its agenda. The exchange of views that took place on the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was extremely useful. Holding such a special session would reaffirm the importance that the entire international community attaches to disarmament and the role that all nations should play in addressing the issue. Cuba firmly supports the beginning of the preparatory process in early 1997 and the convening of the fourth special session in 1999.

Cuba fully shares the humanitarian concerns which arise from the indiscriminate and wanton use of anti-personnel landmines. For this reason our country played an active part in the work of the Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, and believes that its results — particularly the adoption of Additional Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices — constitute a step forward whose importance cannot be ignored. Achieving universality for that Convention, which was ratified by Cuba in 1987, should be our priority at this stage.

The use of mines in the context of Cuba's military doctrine is only provided for as a means of defence against an imminent threat or against external aggression, and then only while taking into account the requirements of marking, signalling and recording their deployment, in order to avoid any effect on the civilian population. Our country uses mines in times of peace only as a means of protection for its national borders, as is the case at the perimeter of the naval base at Guantánamo, which is on Cuban territory that is unlawfully occupied by the United States against the wishes of our people.

Our country reaffirms its sincere interest in supporting those international initiatives which can genuinely help to find more effective solutions to the humanitarian problems caused from the irresponsible and indiscriminate use of mines. Those initiatives must, at the same time, guarantee the legitimate national security interests of States which, like Cuba, use such weapons for strictly defensive purposes and in compliance with all existing applicable international provisions. I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's readiness to contribute our experience to the implementation of international programmes for the treatment and rehabilitation of mine victims.

One last issue which we would like to raise for the Committee's consideration is our interest in working within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement with a view to submitting this year, once again, a draft resolution on compliance with environmental standards in the development and implementation of disarmament and arms control agreements. We hope that, given the importance of this issue, the broad support which a similar text received last year will not only be maintained, but will this year receive the support of all delegations.

Mr. Tayeb (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me pleasure at the outset to convey the congratulations of my delegation to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of this important Committee during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am confident that your expertise and wisdom will help us achieve the desired results for the benefit of the international community, in terms of the achievement of complete disarmament and the establishment of a secure international environment free from nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. I assure you, Sir, of our full cooperation towards achieving the objectives of this Committee, God willing.

This Committee is meeting at a time of intensified international and regional efforts towards achieving nuclear disarmament. There is growing optimism and public awareness with regard to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was extended indefinitely last year, and a few weeks ago the General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

With regard to the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty was signed towards the end of 1995, thus making South-East Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In April of this year, the Treaty of Pelindaba was signed to make the continent of Africa yet another nuclear-weapon-free zone. In addition, France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America signed the Protocol to the Treaty of Rarotonga, which declared the South Pacific a nuclear-weapon-free zone. These instruments, together with the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the Antarctic Treaty make the southern hemisphere free of nuclear weapons.

In our region, the Middle East, the United Arab Emirates and Djibouti have acceded to the NPT. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Oman announced at the current session of the General Assembly his country's

decision to accede to the Treaty soon. Thus, all Middle Eastern countries, have become parties to the NPT, with the exception of Israel, which has so far refused to accede.

Moreover, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion on 8 July 1996 on the Legality of the Threat or the Use of Nuclear Weapons. The Court decided unanimously that all States are obligated to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. The Court's opinion should remove any doubt about the nature of the commitment of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Indeed the Treaty affirms not only affirms the responsibility to continue negotiations in good faith, as some have asserted, but also commits all parties to conclude negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

These improvements in international disarmament activities should provide an impetus for further international efforts and cooperation to achieve the final objective — an objective pursued by all humankind: to live in a world free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. As the Secretary-General stated last week in his address to the Committee, the race to nuclear disarmament should become as relentless as was the nuclear arms race during the cold war.

Consolidating a climate of international peace and security requires true political will and determination on the part of all States, especially nuclear-weapon States, to disavow dependence on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to achieve national security. It also requires restraint in order to achieve progress leading to total nuclear disarmament, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1 (I) of 1946, which deals with all weapons of mass destruction.

The main objective of regional and international treaties governing disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, is to consolidate a climate of peace and security throughout the world. These legal instruments cannot achieve their objectives unless they are universal, multilateral and verifiable. Otherwise, there will be a lack of genuine commitment to abide by those treaties, which will have serious adverse implications for global security. For example, States such as Israel, which are outside nuclear-weapon-free zones, can develop nuclear weapons, thus posing a grave threat to international peace and security.

It is necessary to develop safeguards and verification systems to prevent abuses by any party, as has been the case with Iraq and other States parties to the NPT. Becoming a party to a Treaty is not enough in itself unless there is a detailed safeguards and verification system.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia supports and participates in international and regional efforts aiming at the elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In this connection, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, on 9 August 1996 before the Convention entered into force. Thus, Saudi Arabia has become party to all Treaties related to weapons of mass destruction.

My country also supported the General Assembly resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, because the Treaty represents an important positive step towards nuclear disarmament, although it is not a final objective in itself. We had hoped that the Treaty would be part of a total ban on nuclear weapons and would prohibit nuclear tests in all forms, which would have contributed to all aspects of nuclear disarmament, including non-proliferation. We fear that waiting for 44 States to ratify the Treaty will result in delaying its entry into force, which, God forbid, would represent a setback in international disarmament efforts.

As we see, many regions around the world have succeeded in establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones as a result of cooperation among the States in those regions and their awareness of the need for peaceful coexistence. However, despite international and regional efforts, the Middle East is still unable to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This is due to Israel's refusal to cooperate, despite numerous United Nations resolutions that, since 1974, have called for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. Among them are General Assembly resolution 50/66, Security Council resolution 487 (1981) and Security Council resolution 687 (1991) whose paragraph 14 states that conforming to section (c) of the resolution represents an important step towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from nuclear weapons as well as the means of their delivering.

Despite all those resolutions, no practical steps have been taken to implement them because of Israel's refusal to do so. Although Israel pretends to support the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone, it has not yet taken any practical steps in that direction. Israel refuses to accede

to the NPT and to submit its nuclear facilities to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. Thus, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that possesses nuclear facilities not subject to IAEA safeguards. This state of affairs represents a serious danger to the safety and security of the entire region. Moreover, Israel refuses to respond to the will of the international community by continuously trying to keep the issue outside the United Nations, in the same manner that it keeps the United Nations outside the peace process, even though it was the United Nations that was responsible for establishing the State of Israel, by resolution 181 (II) of 1947.

All such efforts by Israel aim at avoiding the implementation of United Nations resolutions and at the continuation of its military and nuclear programmes outside international supervision. The goal is hegemony and the spread of nuclear terror in the region.

The States of the Middle East had hoped that the peace process that started in Madrid in 1991 would encourage Israel to respond to international and regional concerns regarding nuclear weapons in the Middle East. A Working Group was established within the framework of the multilateral peace negotiations to deal with armaments and security in the region, including nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. However, within that Group, Israel took a negative position on issues related to nuclear weapons. It refused to declare its intention to accede to the NPT and to place its installations under the IAEA safeguards system even after achievement of a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, thus undermining the concept of confidence-building among the States in the region. This negative and intransigent attitude by Israel in the multilateral negotiations has made it impossible for the Group to make any tangible progress.

It is ironic that while Israel's response to the Secretary-General concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East states that the

"Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security ... is the most promising forum to pursue the negotiations between the parties." (A/51/286, p. 5, para. 8).

It insists, in the course of negotiations within that Group, on refusing to deal with nuclear disarmament in the Middle East.

It is indeed regrettable that, despite the existence of an international consensus and a strong regional desire to make

the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone, Israel remains an obstacle to the realization by the peoples of the region of their aspiration to live in peace, free from nuclear terror.

For these reasons, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia requests the international community and the Security Council to take the necessary steps to ensure that Israel accedes to the NPT and that it places all of its nuclear facilities under the international safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). By acceding to the NPT, Israel would help pave the way for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which would have a great impact on efforts towards the creation of a world free from nuclear weapons.

We are hopeful that the work of the Committee will achieve its objectives through the adoption of resolutions that deal with this important issue and by proposing practical solutions aimed at realizing the dream of the peoples of the Middle East to live in a secure environment free from nuclear terror.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): In the past year the international community has witnessed historic achievements in its disarmament agenda: the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been opened for signature; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), one ratification away from entering into force is to become operational soon; additional restrictions have been placed on the use of certain weapons; and blinding laser weapons have been totally banned.

The conclusion of the Bangkok and Pelindaba Treaties has substantially expanded the area declared to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This area includes 114 States and a population of 1.7 billion. Together with Antarctica, it represents more than 50 per cent of the earth's land mass. Moreover, the International Court of Justice has ruled on the question of the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons and on the obligation to eliminate them. All of these achievements have been made possible by the overall warming of the international climate and the determination of States and peoples to make the world a safer and better place to live.

Mongolia welcomes these positive developments in the field of disarmament and the strengthening of global security. However, systematic and bolder efforts are needed on the part of the international community drastically to reduce the arsenals of warfare and further to ensure

security. To this end, the international community should, in our view, define the priorities and programme for further disarmament. As a member of the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament, Mongolia believes that following the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the conclusion of the CTBT and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the international community should address in earnest the question of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The three-phase draft programme of the Group of 21 to eliminate nuclear weapons by the year 2020 and the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons could form the basis for such an approach and for negotiations.

The conclusion of the CTBT is an important step towards preventing the qualitative improvement and proliferation of nuclear weapons and, ultimately, towards furthering the goal of creating a nuclear-weapon-free world. It is to be hoped that, with the forty-fifth nuclear explosion at Lop Nor on 29 July 1996, mankind has witnessed the last of such ominous explosions. This hope is strengthened by the fact that nuclear-weapon States went beyond their unilateral moratoriums on nuclear explosions when they signed the CTBT, since, under international law, a State, by signing an international treaty or convention, assumes an obligation to refrain from any acts that would defeat that treaty or convention's object and purposes. Politically, even one more test, however small, could cause irreparable damage to the prevailing favourable and constructive international atmosphere and compel others to resume, or embark upon, such testing. The CTBT has special significance for Mongolia, since it is one of the countries most affected by nuclear-test explosions, both in the atmosphere and underground. Almost one fourth of the registered tests were conducted in its vicinity, and the environmental, health and geophysical consequences have yet to be assessed.

It is for these reasons that Mongolia, a member of the Conference on Disarmament, took an active part in the CTBT negotiations. Mongolia sincerely hopes that the Lop Nor test will be the last one on Earth.

The CTBT was a compromise, reached as a result of intense negotiations. It is not perfect. It does not ban the further improvement of nuclear weapons through laboratory-scale nuclear tests, nor does it adequately address the question of nuclear disarmament. The Treaty's final provisions make its entry into force quite cumbersome. Despite this and some other flaws, Mongolia, like some 130 countries, has signed the Treaty. It will ratify it in due time

and will take an active part in the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

It is to be hoped that the vague declarations made on signing the Treaty to the effect that the existence in the world of huge nuclear arsenals and the adherence of others to nuclear deterrence policies demand that the supreme national interests be taken into account to ensure the safety, reliability and effectiveness of nuclear weapons, are not meant to alter the Treaty obligations.

The credibility of the CTBT, like that of other international Treaties in the field of disarmament, will depend on the effectiveness of its verification regime. We therefore believe that the verification system under the CTBT should be efficient and cost-effective and should ensure equal access by all States parties. Mongolia, which is determined to contribute to the implementation of the CTBT, will actively participate in the International Monitoring System for the detection of nuclear explosions. It has therefore offered to have a number of seismic, radionuclide and infrasound stations on its territory. As a result, Mongolia's commitment to the International Monitoring System will be broader than that of many other States parties. This fact, as well as the country's economic and financial situation, compel it to share with others the financial and other costs that will eventually be connected with operating those stations. In this connection, Mongolia is pleased to note Japan's offer to expand cooperation with developing countries on seismic technologies.

When Belarus removes the last of its strategic nuclear missiles this year, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine will together have removed 3,400 nuclear weapons from their territories, dismantled their nuclear infrastructures and thereby become non-nuclear-weapon States, both *de jure* and *de facto*. Like others, Mongolia commends these States for the concrete steps they have taken in accordance with their international obligations.

It is also gratifying to note that four of the nuclear Powers are reducing or contemplating reducing their arsenals. Russia and the United States are reducing their strategic arsenals under the START I Treaty, well ahead of the scheduled date of December 1999. It is expected that within two years the United Kingdom will have reduced its nuclear arsenal to one nuclear-weapon system, while France has declared its intention to abolish its land-based nuclear missiles altogether. However, the existence of stockpiles of nuclear weapons that are equivalent to 750,000 of the

nuclear weapons used on Hiroshima shows that we are still a long way from making the world a safer place.

We hope that once the Russian Federation ratifies START II, and both Russia and the United States thereby proceed to cut their strategic nuclear weapons to 3,000 and 3,500, respectively, negotiations on START III — preferably involving all the other nuclear-weapon States — will get under way.

The closing down and dismantling of nuclear-weapon-system infrastructures should, in our view, be another concrete step towards nuclear disarmament. The closing down and dismantling of the Semipalatinsk testing facility and of infrastructures in Ukraine and Belarus should now be followed by similar steps by the nuclear-weapon States. We welcome the French Government's commitment to close down its testing site on the Mururoa atoll in the Pacific. Like other countries of the region, Mongolia would particularly welcome the closure and eventual dismantling of the existing testing facility in our region. Its dismantling would underline the commitment to nuclear disarmament. Likewise, specialized scientific research laboratories and other nuclear-weapon-related infrastructures within the nuclear-weapon States should either be closed down or converted so as to put an end to the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons.

The successful conclusion of the CTBT raises the question of what to do next. Mongolia, like the overwhelming majority of States, believes that the international community should vigorously pursue nuclear disarmament. It is not only a political imperative but the legal obligation of States, as reflected in the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, issued on 8 July 1996. The Court unanimously recognized that

"There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." (A/51/4, p. 39)

Moreover, as the report of the Canberra Commission convincingly demonstrates, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is redundant and dangerous, and diminishes the security of all States, including that of the nuclear-weapon States themselves.

We believe that the establishment of more nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the regions concerned constitutes an important disarmament

measure and thereby enhances regional and global peace and security. Mongolia therefore warmly welcomes the conclusion of the Treaties of Bangkok and Pelindaba, which establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in vast new areas, and the signing by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America of the Protocols to the Rarotonga Treaty. The nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the two Treaties to which I referred demonstrate the will of the peoples of those areas to be free from nuclear threat, and gives a powerful impetus to the process of disarmament.

In 1992 Mongolia declared its territory to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone. This step was taken when former Soviet troops withdrew from our country in the wake of the end of the cold war and the normalization of Russian-Chinese and Mongolian-Chinese relations. Our policy can be better understood if we bear in mind that in the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of Sino-Soviet tension, there was a risk that Mongolia would, accidentally or otherwise, be turned into a battleground, not excluding the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons. The withdrawal of the troops of one nuclear Power from Mongolia rendered meaningless its being targeted by other nuclear Powers, as had been the case in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mongolia's initiative was welcomed by both nuclear and non-nuclear States alike. The former reiterated their negative and positive security assurances with respect to Mongolia. The initiative enjoys the full support of the Non-Aligned Movement as a whole. Although its nature is unique, our initiative is an expression of a policy designed by a State to protect itself from being drawn into the nuclear calculations or plans of others by precluding the deployment of nuclear weapons or parts thereof on its territory, thereby contributing to nuclear security and confidence-building. It is a subregional measure that is in line with the national interests of Mongolia itself, as well as with the interests of its two neighbours, both of which happen to be nuclear Powers.

As a country situated at the heart of the Asian continent, Mongolia believes that the Central Asian region, with its almost limitless opportunities, and, yet, enormous challenges, could be turned into a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The vulnerable, landlocked countries of the Central Asian region have vast territories, rapidly growing populations and rich natural resources. Most of the countries of the region are in transition. They are in the process of State-building, identifying their national interests and priorities and restructuring their economies. Mindful of the situation in some southern parts of Asia, and of the growing outside interest in their untapped energy and mineral resources, as

well as their non-utilized human resources, it is needless to say that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this subregion would have a positive impact on maintaining and strengthening the overall balance and stability in the subregion and its strategically important adjacent areas.

Like Mongolia, most of the countries of this subregion have, on a number of occasions, expressed their interest in declaring the Central Asian region a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Mongolia therefore believes that the General Assembly could consider the question of turning this vast Asian heartland into a nuclear-weapon-free zone, especially since both nuclear-weapon States in the region have consistently supported the initiatives of non-nuclear-weapon States to establish such zones. Indeed, on 12 April 1996, the President of the Security Council, speaking on behalf of members of the Council, encouraged the establishment of such zones when referring to the signing of the Treaty of Pelindaba.

By signing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the non-nuclear-weapon States have forsworn the acquisition of such weapons, and we therefore expect the nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against them. To date only China has made a unilateral commitment, which it reiterated in April 1995, that at no time and under no circumstances would it be first to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or the countries in nuclear-weapon-free zones. Mongolia commends Security Council resolution 984 (1995) on unilateral security assurances by the nuclear-weapon States to non-nuclear-weapon States as an important step towards the speedy conclusion of a substantive international treaty.

Mongolia believes that the question of banning the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons should be promptly addressed by the international community. The Conference on Disarmament should, in our view, redouble its efforts to have the cut-off treaty ready for signature in the near future, especially since that is one of the understandings arrived at during the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Before leaving the nuclear issue, I should like briefly to touch upon nuclear-waste issues. The question of nuclear-waste disposal is acquiring increasing importance as a result of both the international prohibition on dumping radioactive waste in the oceans, imposed by the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and

Other Matter, and the rapid increase in the quantity of nuclear waste. The increasing use of nuclear power stations in the world and the practical measures of nuclear disarmament require that States tackle these issues urgently bearing in mind, *inter alia*, the interests of neighbouring States and of the international community as a whole.

Until radioactive waste is safely disposed of, States will always be exposed to this silent, invisible threat, since the radiation produced by the decay of radioactive materials, as defined in the draft convention on the prohibition of radiological weapons, could bring about death, suffering, environmental disaster and destruction. It is for this reason that the General Assembly, in its resolutions on the prohibition of the dumping of radioactive waste, has referred specifically to the potential hazards underlying any disposal of nuclear waste that could, by implication, have the same effects as a radiological weapon. In this context, Mongolia welcomes the decision of the Moscow Summit on Nuclear Safety and Security to support and expedite the conclusion of the convention on the safety of radioactive waste management.

I should now like to turn to some non-nuclear issues. It is gratifying to note that the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction is soon to become operational, as 64 countries, including Mongolia, have already ratified it. Ratification of the Convention by all the signatory States, and especially by the two States with the largest arsenals of chemical weapons, would constitute an important step towards eliminating an entire class of weapons of mass destruction. Despite the progress registered since the third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, we feel that there is a need to further reinforce the Convention by providing it with some teeth in the form of a legally binding and effective verification regime. In this respect all the necessary political support should be given to the Ad Hoc Working Group.

Disarmament in the field of weapons of mass destruction should go hand in hand with conventional disarmament. Efforts should be made to ensure transparency with regard to armaments, so as to enhance control over illicit arms trafficking and further prohibit and restrict weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. In this connection, the preoccupation of the international community with landmines is truly justified. There are almost 110 million

active landmines, and each year they kill or maim some 20,000 people, especially civilians. Mongolia fully shares the growing concern of the international community. It is considering acceding to amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. In doing so Mongolia would bear in mind, on the one hand, international efforts to ban certain categories of landmines for humanitarian reasons and, on the other, its national security interests. The length of Mongolia's land border, as well as the size of its population, make it imperative that landmines are used to ensure the inviolability of its frontiers — an important element of State sovereignty and national security — until a viable and more effective alternative to them is conceived and introduced.

Regional approaches to confidence-building and disarmament are of paramount importance in ensuring international peace and security. That is why Mongolia fully supported the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum — the newly emerging intergovernmental multilateral security dialogue arrangement in the Asia-Pacific region, which can play an important role in regional confidence-building, arms control and, perhaps, the settlement of regional political and military issues. Mongolia is interested in, and working towards, joining the forum soon. It strongly supports the joint efforts of Asian States to constitute a regional conventional arms register, which should be more specific and detailed than the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, as well as the publication of defence White Papers by the States of the region.

Mongolia welcomes the signing of the Shanghai agreement between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on strengthening confidence in the military field in border areas as a major event that is of paramount importance for increasing confidence in our Asian heartland. Turning to United Nations-related regional activity, my delegation would like to commend the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific for its work in organizing regional conferences and seminars on various disarmament- and security-related issues. Mongolia, like others, will continue to support the Kathmandu process.

In conclusion, I should like specifically to underline the very useful and valuable role played by non-governmental organizations in our common search for the optimal ways and means of achieving the noble goals of arms control and disarmament under conditions of greater

security. I should also like to express my personal appreciation to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute for its tireless and dedicated work, for the indispensable yearbooks and for the research reports on specific pressing disarmament and international security issues.

Mr. Jayanama (Thailand): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the delegation of Thailand, I should like to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Your distinguished career and vast experience are well known to all of us and I am confident that under your able guidance, the deliberations of this important Committee will be brought to a successful conclusion. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau of the Committee.

As far as international peace and security are concerned, this session of the General Assembly began on a high note with the opening of the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was adopted at the previous session in September. My delegation is pleased that, after 50 years of waiting, nuclear-test explosions are finally outlawed. Now we can say that there is an additional international mechanism to help constrain the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and to help impede the senseless race towards nuclear superiority, particularly at the regional level, thus making the world a safer place. My delegation is convinced that, in spite of its many deficiencies, the Treaty represents a step forward towards a higher goal of general and complete disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. Thailand will therefore join others in signing and ratifying the Treaty.

As I have mentioned, through its adoption of the CTBT, the General Assembly has put in place one additional mechanism for nuclear disarmament and the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Our future task is to put in place more of these mechanisms and to ensure their complementarity and relevance. In this connection, my delegation believes that the CTBT is an invaluable complement to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its safeguards and we hope that the relationship between the two regimes will be further developed and strengthened.

On the NPT, in particular, Thailand believes that further efforts should be made by States Parties to fulfil their obligations under articles IV and VI of the Treaty and, to this end, we look forward to actively participating in the process leading to the NPT review conference in the year 2000, beginning with the first Preparatory Committee

meeting next year. In the meantime, we wish to register our full support for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s Programme "93+2" which, once approved in its entirety by the IAEA Board of Governors, will considerably enhance the Agency's capability in performing its task in nuclear inspections and, thus, strengthening the NPT regime.

Now that we have the CTBT and the NPT where we want them, the next logical step would be to further intensify our efforts towards nuclear disarmament by commencing multilateral negotiations on a treaty to ban the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons, the so-called fissile material cut-off treaty. Such negotiations could take place simultaneously with the negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. Negotiations on these two issues should be carried out by the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. The negotiations on a phased programme on nuclear disarmament, in particular, would be in line with General Assembly resolution 50/70 P, which calls for the establishment of an ad hoc committee in the Conference on Disarmament for this purpose. And while we await the commencement of such negotiations, my delegation would like to register Thailand's support for the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons submitted by 28 members of the Group of 21 in Geneva earlier this year. We believe that the proposal represents a realistic approach which could serve as a useful guideline for future negotiations on nuclear disarmament.

While it is the duty of Governments to negotiate nuclear disarmament and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons, it should be the prerogative of the international community and civil society to forge a global consensus against these and other abhorrent weapons of mass destruction. It is with this belief that Thailand welcomes the historic Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. While the Court's decision fails categorically to spell out the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons in all circumstances, it does, in effect, provide a firm foundation for world public opinion towards nuclear weapons.

So far, the opinion against nuclear armament has been loud and clear, particularly from those peoples whose States do not possess or aspire to possess nuclear weapons. This public outcry has been made evident and concrete through the creation of various nuclear-weapon-free zones in regions

around the world. Instead of existing in isolation, these nuclear-weapon-free zones now attempt to cooperate with one another and learn from each other's experiences. It is believed that this exercise will help create a network of cooperation which would eventually help weave regions together in a nuclear-weapon-free world. As the host for the signing of the Bangkok Treaty, establishing the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone earlier this year, Thailand is particularly proud of its contribution to this achievement and is resolved to cooperate closely with all fellow States parties to nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties around the world.

Thailand believes that this effort to form and generate world public opinion against nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction should continue to be pursued at a vigorous pace. This is the reason why my delegation also fully supports the United Nations's efforts and those of other international institutions and non-governmental organizations in promoting public awareness of the need for disarmament. In particular, Thailand appreciates the work of regional centres, such as the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, which tailor their programmes and projects in response to the particular needs and interests of the region. Through the years, Thailand has found the so-called Kathmandu process initiated by the Asia-Pacific Centre useful and intends to continue to be an active participant in that process. And, since the Centre exists parallel to other regional institutions with similar purposes, such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations Regional Forum and the security dialogues in East Asia, it could only help enhance cooperation and confidence-building in that region.

While the world focuses on nuclear disarmament, it should not lose sight of other weapons of mass destruction and certain conventional weapons which may cause excessive injury or have indiscriminate effects. As with nuclear weapons, there is a need for a harmonious and comprehensive global approach in dealing with these weapons. As a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Thailand is now accelerating its legislative procedure in order to be able to ratify the Treaty at the earliest possible date. In this connection, it is regrettable that, although the Treaty is now about to enter into force, two major countries that presumably possess the largest and the most sophisticated arsenals of chemical weapons have yet to ratify it.

As for the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction,

Thailand is following closely the work of the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention. We welcome the Group's emphasis on promoting international cooperation, particularly in the area of verification, and believe that future mechanisms for this purpose, which are to be negotiated, should be universal and non-discriminatory.

As far as the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is concerned, Thailand is pleased that this year's Review Conference on the Convention managed to make notable progress, especially with regard to the new Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons (Protocol IV). Thailand is also pleased that there is agreement on an amended Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices. As a landmine-affected country that does not manufacture or export landmines, Thailand will continue to work with the international community to realize the goals of this Convention. In this connection, my delegation also wishes to reiterate its support for United Nations efforts in this area, particularly the United Nations initiative in drawing up a comprehensive mine clearance programme, launching mine awareness activities and, more importantly, establishing the Voluntary Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance.

The sole purpose of all weaponry is to inflict injury or take lives. Small arms can turn into weapons that can cause excessive injuries and have indiscriminate effects if they arrive in truckloads and are delivered into the hands of war fanatics. It is with this notion that Thailand welcomes all efforts to regulate the international or cross-border flow of weapons. In particular, my delegation is gratified that this year's session of the Disarmament Commission was able to adopt the guidelines on international transfer of illicit arms. Despite their lack of legal force, the guidelines are nevertheless an important step towards eliminating illegal armaments, especially small arms, which are too prevalent in all conflict areas of the world.

In this connection, my delegation also wishes to take this opportunity to reiterate its continued support for the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Into its fifth year of existence, the Register has proven, beyond any doubt, to be a useful tool in creating transparency in arms and, thus, confidence-building among States, at both the international and regional levels.

In his statement before the General Assembly this year, Mr. Amnuay Viravan, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, called on all

Member States to make the total elimination of all nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, as well as of other weapons of mass destruction, a top priority for the twenty-first century. I am here to repeat that call and to propose further that equal attention should also be given to efforts to regulate and control conventional weapons.

My delegation stands ready to cooperate with all like-minded countries in working towards this end, to work together to realize the goals of general and complete disarmament. In particular, we look forward to participating actively in the fourth special session of the General Assembly on disarmament, as well as in its preparatory work that will begin early next year. Through this special session, set to take place at the dawn of a new century, we will be able to plan and visualize a safer and more peaceful future for us and for our children.

Mr. Guillén (Peru)(*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other officers of the Committee.

I would like to comply with the proposal of the President of the Assembly to reduce or eliminate the general debate in the main committees of the General Assembly, limiting it to statements providing information on specific actions that Member States intend to implement.

First, we were among the first signatories of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), having been active in this area since 1963. We support it resolutely. We believe that it constitutes an initial step that should not replace a nuclear disarmament programme. We draw attention to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, which unanimously decided that there exists an obligation for all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We shall maintain the reservation expressed in the Geneva negotiations to the effect that those countries that do not possess nuclear weapons cannot be expected to bear the costs of the technical secretariat. Neither, of course, once the Treaty enters into force, can they be required to defray the costs of verification of the ban.

Secondly, we shall continue to support concerted action among the countries signatories to the treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America, Africa and Asia, with a view to inviting countries committed to that objective to accede to them, thereby extending them to new areas.

Thirdly, we shall be taking part in the consultations intended to commit States to the preparation of a convention that would totally ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines, which have claimed hundreds of thousands of civilian lives among adults and children. We believe that an expression of resolve in this respect, which might possibly take the form of a resolution, should not simply reflect a good intention expressed by the United Nations. If it is not possible to set a specific date for this, it is essential and, I would say, healthy for everyone for the Organization to review the progress being made on this point. An example of regional progress in this area is the resolution recently adopted by the Organization of American States, which urges the establishment of a zone free of anti-personnel landmines on the American continent.

Fourthly, we believe that in order to strengthen regional activities on disarmament, it is vital to approach it in accordance with the specific circumstances and characteristics of each region: that is, the different levels of progress achieved in the area of disarmament, ranging from confidence- and security-building measures to the conclusion of specific arms limitation or disarmament agreements.

In this regard, it is regrettable that after progressively stifling the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean based in Lima, and after being criticized for that, the Secretariat has had to suspend its activities. This is happening at a time when there is a great desire at the United Nations, or so we hear, to disseminate and publicize what the Secretariat and the United Nations are accomplishing in this and indeed all other areas. We do not share the idea that disarmament in Latin America and the Caribbean can be dealt with from an office located in New York. We believe that it would be more candid to say that it will not be dealt with at all, or that it is not of interest.

Fifthly, and lastly, Peru takes the view that any approach or action aimed at disarmament is closely linked to the process of the economic and social development of each nation; in other words, all the resources that are freed should be devoted to the urgent needs of development.

Mr. Albesbas (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of my country's delegation, it gives me pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the post of Chairman of the First Committee. I should like also to assure you of our full support and cooperation in fulfilling the duties and functions entrusted to this Committee.

In the last few years we have witnessed successive and important developments and events in the field of disarmament. Despite their historic importance, these developments have some negative aspects. In the context of my country's comprehensive view of the question of disarmament, I should like to explain our views on these issues, including questions to be considered by the First Committee at this session.

First, the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons of 8 July 1996 confirmed that nothing in customary or conventional international law justifies the threat or use of these weapons. The advisory opinion of the Court refers to the fact that the threat or use of nuclear weapons runs counter to the requirements of the international law applicable in armed conflict, particularly those of the principles and rules of humanitarian law. The Court's advisory opinion also states that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We believe that this opinion, issued by the highest international judiciary organ, constitutes a legal basis on which the First Committee and the General Assembly can build in working steadily towards the acceleration of the nuclear disarmament process.

In this respect, we would like to recall the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted by the Group of 21 at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva (CD/1419). First, we are confident that this programme would contribute effectively to the attainment of one of the most important objectives of our Committee: the phased and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Implementation of the programme will depend on a serious commitment to the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament, without discrimination among States.

Secondly, my country has always hastened to support all measures to free the world from the nuclear threat. In addition to having been a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) for over 20 years, we signed in April 1996 the Treaty of Pelindaba on the denuclearization of Africa, demonstrating our genuine will to free the world from nuclear terror. Regrettably, despite our prior support for the formulation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), we did not find in the text of the current Treaty any convincing proof of its comprehensive nature. This has greatly disappointed us because although the Treaty bans explosive tests, it turns a blind eye to other technical methods for the qualitative

development of nuclear weapons, such as laboratory and similar tests. Our understanding of any treaty that bans nuclear tests in a comprehensive manner is that it must cover all tests aimed at developing nuclear weapons, vertically and horizontally. For these reasons, my country has not yet signed the Treaty. However, we are ready to review our position should conditions emerge that give this Treaty greater credibility and confirm the effective discontinuance of all types of nuclear-weapon tests.

Here, I should like to recall the statement made by Mr. Omar Muntasser, Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in the general debate of the General Assembly on 1 October 1996:

"The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty recently approved by the General Assembly falls short of the aspirations of the peoples of the world to a total ban on all nuclear tests. As formulated, the Treaty merely perpetuates the status quo. It could even pre-empt efforts aimed at achieving a world totally free from nuclear terror." (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 17th meeting.)

Thirdly, the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to accept the membership of 23 new countries is a praiseworthy decision. We hope that this trend will continue in order that all countries wishing to participate in the work of this negotiating forum can obtain membership without restrictions. We look forward to a larger role for the Conference on Disarmament in nuclear disarmament initiatives. We also urge the Conference on Disarmament to take the necessary measures to begin negotiations immediately, with a view to concluding a cut-off convention on the production of fissionable materials that can be used in producing nuclear weapons.

We would like to recall that at its fiftieth session the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/70 P, which calls on the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations early in 1996 on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament, with a view to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time-bound framework to be agreed upon. We appreciate the burden shouldered by the Conference on Disarmament as the only negotiating forum on disarmament questions. However, we urge it to continue its efforts and benefit from the present international climate, which we consider favourable to serious action.

Fourthly, the meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to be held in the year 2000, take on great importance in the light of the decision of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We hope that these meetings will be held in an atmosphere of understanding and common endeavour, so that we may be able to properly prepare for the next conference and implement the resolutions and recommendations of the 1995 Conference, including considering what measures need to be taken to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of these weapons. In this respect, we would like to second what was said by some States in their interventions: It is high time that the Conference on Disarmament initiate, through an expert committee, a study of this question, with a view to reaching an instrument or an international agreement that requires nuclear States to give guarantees to non-nuclear States.

Fifthly, and in conclusion, I should like to refer to a positive phenomenon in the field of nuclear-weapon disarmament: the increase in the number of agreements establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones. My country recently signed the Treaty of Pelindaba, which made Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. These achievements are gratifying to us all. Regrettably, the Middle East still suffers from the spectre of nuclear terror. As members of the Committee are aware, Israel is the only nuclear Power in the region. It alone refuses to accede to the NPT or place its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is the only impediment to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In this regard, I should like to draw the attention of members to General Assembly resolution 50/73, which calls on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the NPT.

We hope that members of this Committee will give this question the attention it merits, and we urge the Government of Israel to accede to the NPT and to agree on a timetable for the dismantling and destruction of Israeli nuclear stock, under United Nations supervision.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic): On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I wish to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. Aware of your rich

diplomatic experience and skill, I am confident that under your guidance, our work will be successfully concluded.

I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to convey, through you, my deep appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Luvsangiin Erdenechuluun, the former Permanent Representative of Mongolia, for his able stewardship of the Committee last year.

The recent adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the fiftieth session of the General Assembly was an important event in United Nations history in the field of disarmament. Quite naturally, like many other developing countries, we regret that the Treaty did not include a specific fixed time-frame for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons at the global level. We nevertheless decided to join the world community in adopting the Treaty because we regarded its adoption as an important step towards a gradual achievement of nuclear disarmament. Despite its imperfections, the Treaty, in our opinion, if rigorously implemented, would help prevent the nuclear-weapon States from upgrading their nuclear arsenals and the non-nuclear-weapon States from acquiring them. This is how, we believe, nuclear disarmament can be gradually achieved.

Nowadays, international peace and security seem to be assured and strengthened as nuclear-weapon-free zones are established by the regional States concerned. The Treaty of Bangkok, signed on 15 December 1995, declaring South-East Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone, the Treaty of Pelindaba, signed on 11 April 1996, creating a nuclear-free-zone in Africa, and the Treaties of Tlatelolco and Rarotonga establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the South Pacific, respectively, are cases in point.

The establishment of such nuclear-weapon-free zones demonstrates the genuine aspiration of the peoples of the regions concerned to be free from nuclear threat or annihilation. This positive trend deserves our full encouragement and support.

The Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is an important body and one that could draw the attention of the international community to the nuclear issue. We look forward in the years ahead to studying its recommendations aimed at the achievement of its ultimate goal: the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic regards the Advisory Opinion of the International

Court of Justice concerning the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons as an important contribution to the world community's efforts to maintain international peace and security. By its unanimous pronouncement that there is an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, the Court gave a strong signal that it is about time that we all do what we can to rid our planet of nuclear weapons and thereby save all humankind from nuclear holocaust.

While we examine the issue of peace and disarmament, it is necessary to recognize the roles played by the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. They are playing a valuable role in efforts to promote regional arms control as well as to build confidence and trust among countries in the respective regions. In this respect, my delegation fully supports the initiatives, programmes and activities for peace and disarmament being conducted by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, with its headquarters in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic supports the efforts made by the world community to minimize the use of inhumane and injurious weapons, including anti-personnel landmines. As a victim of the unexploded ordnance left over from a 30-year war of independence, our country is fully aware of the grave and disastrous consequences those destructive weapons can cause. In an effort to cope with this problem, the Lao Government, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), established on 1 August 1995 a trust fund for the clearance of unexploded ordnance. A national programme on the subject has been initiated and is now being implemented, with the objective of reducing the number of civilian casualties and increasing the amount of land available for food production as well as for other development activities.

Since the establishment of the fund, contributions and pledges have been received, in cash and in kind, from friendly Governments and international organizations, among them Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, UNDP and UNICEF. On behalf of the Lao Government and people, I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks and sincere gratitude to them. It is our hope that other countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations will also contribute financially to this fund.

Since our country now enjoys peace and political stability, the land, once cleared, will remain cleared. Our national clearance programme seems ambitious, but with the support and cooperation of the world community, it is our belief that it can be set in motion and translated into reality.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. Chairman, please accept the felicitations of the Pakistan delegation on your well-deserved election to preside over the First Committee. We are confident that under your able leadership the Committee will adopt far-reaching decisions on a global agenda for disarmament. May I also express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Erdenchuluun of Mongolia, for the effective manner in which he conducted the Committee's work last year.

The end of the cold war opened up new and exciting opportunities to realize the United Nations Charter's vision of international peace and collective security based on the just solution of conflicts and disputes, non-use of force, and control of armaments at the lowest possible levels. In the past few years, we have witnessed a number of important achievements in the quest for disarmament: the START II Treaty was concluded, and nuclear weapons are being actually dismantled and destroyed; the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction was concluded and may soon come into force; the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was indefinitely extended; new Protocols severely restricting anti-personnel landmines were adopted by consensus; nuclear-weapon-free zones now cover the whole of the southern hemisphere; and after 40 years the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has been adopted. Despite its shortcomings, Pakistan supported the CTBT because it can halt nuclear escalation in our region and prevent the nuclear Powers from developing new kinds of nuclear weapons.

However, our justifiable sense of accomplishment must be tempered by a sober acknowledgement of the limited nature of the progress made and the larger dangers that loom over the entire disarmament horizon.

Over 30,000 nuclear weapons remain in operational readiness. START II may not be ratified by one of the two parties. Even if it is, over 6,000 nuclear weapons will be retained by the two Powers, discouraging reductions by other nuclear-weapon States and eroding the moral argument for global non-proliferation.

Contrary to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, plans and proposals have been put forward for theatre missile defences, which could escalate rather than arrest the proliferation of nuclear deployments by those Powers that do not possess such anti-missile defences.

The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was construed by some as legitimizing their possession of nuclear weapons indefinitely. The Conference's Principles and Objectives identified only two specific objectives — the CTBT and a cut-off treaty — both of which are perceived by their sponsors as non-proliferation rather than nuclear disarmament measures.

Some nuclear Powers have declared that nuclear weapons are to be retained against uncertain threats emanating from unspecified adversaries, including non-nuclear-weapon States.

There is a robust refusal by some to contemplate multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) is likely to come into force without the two declared chemical-weapon Powers.

The CTBT will not prevent the nuclear Powers from maintaining their nuclear weapons in operational readiness through non-explosive tests. In any event, the CTBT will not come into force so long as one nuclear-capable State maintains the position that it will not sign the Treaty — "not now, not later".

Unless the approach to global disarmament changes, what was described by the European Union representative as a "network of disarmament agreements" is likely to become a tangled web of inequity, offering total security to the powerful and advanced States and consigning the small and the weak to total insecurity. The architecture of disarmament that we are constructing in this exciting new era will be flawed and fragile so long as it is based on imposition and inequality. Such a disarmament structure will be challenged and will eventually collapse.

The world is not composed of the knights of right and the dark forces of destabilization. It consists of large and small, but sovereign, States, each with its own security and developmental concerns, which should not be trampled upon by misguided crusaders.

Some of the so-called export-control regimes are an example of this tendency. For example, the NPT's provisions nowhere sanctioned a suppliers' cartel, whose conditions are applied unequally, almost at whim, against some and not against others. Similarly, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) arbitrarily determines the conditions for restraints on the transfer of unilaterally determined categories of missiles and components to some States and not to others. It does not address threats arising from indigenously produced missiles, thus discriminating against the less advanced and weaker States. It is disturbing that such regimes are now sought to be created on a wider scale.

Pakistan is aware of the need for restraint and responsibility in the production and trade of all armaments, conventional and non-conventional. We are prepared to work for internationally negotiated regimes in sensitive areas. But we cannot subscribe to arbitrary regimes, and we reject in particular the punitive approach espoused by some, often at the cost of their own objectives of promoting global or regional security and non-proliferation.

Fifty years ago, the General Assembly in its first resolution called for the elimination from

"national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction".
(*resolution 1 (I)*)

This call is even more compelling today. The post-cold-war period has created a historic window of opportunity to realize the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. Nuclear Powers are no longer locked in a strategic contest. They do not need nuclear weapons against each other and they certainly do not need them against non-nuclear States. If this opportunity to realize nuclear disarmament is not seized, it may not return. Great Power rivalries may revive. A multipolar nuclear world could multiply the dangers of deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons.

The priority for negotiations on nuclear disarmament was affirmed by the international community at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The milestone advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice upheld the view that the nuclear Powers have an obligation to conduct and conclude such negotiations. This is the view of the overwhelming majority of Member States, having been proclaimed by the Cartagena Summit of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement and reiterated by Ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement in New York last month. The NPT Review and

Extension Conference and the Canberra Commission have also confirmed the priority for nuclear disarmament.

Pakistan, together with the members of the Group of 21, has pressed for the creation of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament, as called for in resolution 50/70 P of the previous session of the General Assembly. We have joined 27 other members of the Group in the Conference on Disarmament in proposing a draft programme for the phased elimination of nuclear weapons, as circulated in document CD/1419 of 7 August 1996. We believe that this proposal can serve as a basis for negotiations in the ad hoc committee of the Conference on Disarmament.

We welcome the European Union's commitment to further systematic and progressive efforts towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and note the importance the European Union attaches to "global nuclear arms reductions". We welcome the readiness of the Russian Federation to open nuclear disarmament talks in the Conference on Disarmament. We welcome in particular China's proposal to conclude a convention prohibiting nuclear weapons.

It should be clarified that the negotiations which the non-aligned and neutral States are seeking would be designed to elaborate a programme for nuclear disarmament, and to identify the measures that constitute the programme, their *inter se* priorities and the phases and time-frames within which they would be achieved. Each disarmament measure included in the programme would be negotiated through a mechanism — bilateral, regional, multilateral or global — that is the most appropriate for that specific measure. The nature of the specific disarmament measure will itself indicate the countries whose participation will be relevant in negotiating it. But we do not agree that nuclear disarmament should be negotiated solely by the nuclear Powers. This contravenes the consensus of the first special session on disarmament (SSOD I) that:

"All States have the right to participate in disarmament negotiations." (*resolution S-10/2, para. 28*)

The Conference on Disarmament remains — despite the CTBT episode — the single multilateral forum for disarmament negotiations. It is not a forum for negotiations on non-proliferation agreements alone. Nuclear disarmament is a central point on the Conference on Disarmament's long-standing agenda. The Conference on Disarmament cannot be dismissed as "an inappropriate forum for an unamenable

subject". The "single hijack" should not create ambitions for a "double hijack".

Pakistan therefore hopes that the Conference on Disarmament will be able to establish ad hoc committees to conduct negotiations on all the items on its agenda. The importance we attach to negative security assurances is well known. Until nuclear disarmament is achieved, nuclear-weapon States have an obligation to assure non-nuclear States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We are most concerned that doctrines envisaging the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States have not been abandoned by most of the nuclear Powers. The logical corollary of the restriction of the security assurances to only the States parties to the NPT or other non-proliferation arrangements is that the use or threat of use against non-nuclear States that are not parties to non-proliferation arrangements can be contemplated. Whether explicit or implicit, this threat is contrary to the Charter's proscription of the use or threat of use of force and would give the threatened State the right, under Article 51, to take the necessary measures for its self-defence.

Pakistan is also prepared to commence the work of an ad hoc committee on the fissile materials convention in the Conference on Disarmament. We welcomed the adoption of the Shannon Report, which reflected the understanding that the scope of the proposed treaty would be further considered in the ad hoc committee. We would like explicitly to ensure that our concerns regarding unequal stockpiles will be addressed in negotiating the treaty, or else this Treaty also will be another measure for non-proliferation alone. It would not contribute at all to nuclear disarmament, as envisaged in paragraph 50 (b) of the Final Document of SSOD I.

There are difficult issues involved in the Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, especially regarding on-site measures, which are not amenable to solutions by a certain date. We agree with the view that compliance with this Convention should also cover the undertakings relating to peaceful cooperation and technology exchanges. We believe that wide adherence to a possible new protocol can be ensured only if there is genuine consensus on sensitive issues. We have supported the intensification of the work of the Ad Hoc Group, which should not, however, overlap with or limit the scheduled sessions of the Conference on Disarmament.

In response to the terrible tragedy of landmines which affects over 60 countries, an amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects was concluded earlier this year, after two and a half years of negotiations. Pakistan declared at the time that it did not export landmines. We have scrapped an entire programme for the development of anti-personnel landmines to conform with Protocol II. We will complete the detectability requirements well ahead of the stipulated period of 10 years.

The immediate challenge is to ensure the widest possible acceptance of the new rules on the development, use and transfer of landmines. We hope that cooperation for the transfer of technologies to implement these rules will be forthcoming. Another priority is the formidable yet compelling task of clearing the millions of mines that are continuing to kill innocent people. Pressing ahead immediately for a global ban on anti-personnel landmines may respond to popular sentiment but could prove fruitless. It could also undermine the immediate aim of securing widest adherence to the newly adopted Protocol. The goal of prohibition will become realistic once alternatives to the use of anti-personnel landmines for self-defence are developed and become available.

While nuclear weapons remain the focus of international concern, we cannot ignore the threats to peace, and breaches of the peace, emanating from conventional weapons. There are four dimensions to the threat posed by conventional weapons today: first, the insecurity and instability created in several regions of the world by the larger production and acquisition of armaments by some States, which threaten other States, especially smaller neighbouring countries; secondly, the growing and unequal concentration of sophisticated and increasingly lethal conventional weapons in the hands of only a few advanced States, thus further exacerbating the inequality between the developed and developing countries; thirdly, the incentives for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction created by the imbalance in conventional weapons in certain parts of the world; and fourthly, the exacerbation of conflicts and tensions within and among States by the illegal transfer of weapons, including small arms, for terrorists and criminals, and the denial of the legitimate means of self-defence to peoples struggling for self-determination and national independence.

The international community must address all the above dimensions of conventional weapons in a comprehensive and systematic way. So far, the approach

has been partial and piecemeal. Pakistan subscribes to the concept of promoting confidence among States through transparency. We have submitted reports annually to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Unfortunately, transparency will not by itself remove the danger posed by unequal levels of conventional arms in certain regions.

Similarly, the bid to control the transfer of armaments, without regard to such regional asymmetries, can actually accentuate imbalance and the threat to peace, instead of ameliorating the situation. We welcome the guidelines on the transfer of conventional weapons adopted by the Disarmament Commission in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H. It would be appropriate for the Commission or the Conference on Disarmament to examine the feasibility of evolving guidelines for the production, transfer and deployment of conventional weapons as a means of promoting regional and global stability.

Pakistan believes that in most instances the regional approach offers the most effective framework successfully to negotiate agreements for conventional arms control as well as aspects of non-proliferation. The General Assembly has asked the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate principles for conventional arms control within the regional and subregional framework. This will make a useful contribution to specific negotiations for conventional arms control in various regions of the world. The Conference on Disarmament should commence this process in 1997.

A close examination of the situation in various parts of the world indicates that both conventional arms control and nuclear non-proliferation can be facilitated by addressing and resolving the underlying causes of conflicts and disputes. Arms are acquired by most States for defence against threats that arise almost always from conflicts and disputes in their region. Thus the political differences among the parties must be addressed together with the disarmament dimensions of regional security.

South Asia has been described as the most dangerous place in the world. The cold war is not over in our region; indeed it often heats up to fever pitch. The core cause of tension in South Asia is the Kashmir dispute and the brutal denial of the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people. We hope that conditions will soon be created for the commencement of a genuine bilateral dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve the Kashmir dispute, in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions. Such bilateral talks can be supplemented by

measures at the regional and global levels to address the interrelated problems of security, arms control and non-proliferation in South Asia.

In her address to the General Assembly on 3 October 1996, the Prime Minister of Pakistan proposed the convening of a multilateral conference on peace and security in South Asia. Such a conference could promote the following three goals: measures to remove the underlying causes of conflict and tension between India and Pakistan, including Kashmir; agreements on conventional arms control and confidence-building measures, including mutually agreed force ratios and measures to avoid surprise attack; and measures for nuclear restraint, avoidance of nuclear-weapons proliferation, and non-development and non-deployment of nuclear-capable missiles.

After a year during which our neighbour made preparations for a second nuclear test, when it declared that its nuclear option is open, when it reiterated its determination to develop and deploy nuclear-capable missiles and when it opposed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the international community must surely recognize that a solution to the security problems of South Asia is indispensable for the success of the global endeavours for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Pakistan sees its security as being closely dependent on the success of these endeavours. We shall therefore continue to contribute actively and constructively to the work of all forums where the goals of global and regional disarmament are being pursued and promoted.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.